

CMSAF James Cody
"The Enlisted Perspective"
AFA - Air & Space Conference and Technology Exposition
17 September 2014

CMSAF Cody: Thank you.

We're going to pop up, before I start the presentation, just a quick photo of some great men and women. General Welsh introduced one of our wounded warriors yesterday. This is a picture of wounded, ill and injured Airmen that just finished up with the Invictus Games over in London. They did just a phenomenal job, and I'd like Nick to kind of just tell you his story before I get into my presentation.

[Video shown]

A pretty great example, Chief, of the American spirit in our Air Force I'd say. I really would.

Both Madame Secretary, Chief, thanks so much for being here. Thanks for your leadership. I kind of get to bat cleanup here, right? The Secretary, the Chief, I'll kind of roll in here and I'll try to close this out from at least our team perspective.

We started it out with some really nice presentations to kind of show the history of our Air Force and brought us forward. I'm going to kind of start out with that same thing but a little bit different context to it, and kind of let you see where you're at. So why don't we roll that real quick.

[Video shown]

We all need to be extremely proud of this, when you put this into the context of where we've come. The smallest Air Force in the history of our Air Force. More globally engaged than in the history of our country. The longest sustained combat operations in the history of our country. You should all be extremely proud of that legacy that you saw brought forward by both the Secretary and the Chief in this video, but be proud of your own legacy that you're writing today and the things that you do.

It really does come down to what we always like to talk to. It's about our Airmen. It's about that spirit in our Airmen. That pride.

Over the last few months Athena and I have had the opportunity along with the Chief to travel and meet them. You heard some of their stories yesterday. You look at Hope here, and you just look at that smile. And if you're not drawing any pride from that just by looking at her, I'm thinking you're not looking at her. We spent a day and a half with Hope. She's the Career Assistant Advisor out there at Travis. She has such phenomenal energy in taking care of our Airmen. Whether they're deciding to stay in our Air Force and making the decision that's right for them, their family and our country, or whether they're making the transition and understanding where they're going. She is so engaged with them.

But what most people don't know is Hope's story. Her own story, and how passionate she is after 18 years of service. Eighteen years earlier she was homeless. She came to Basic Training with a packet of underwear and a toothbrush that her recruiter bought for her. She never forgets that. She never forgets where she began and what it meant to her to be able to have this opportunity to serve in our Air Force, the world's greatest Air Force and she gives back every single day. She serves every single day. Just a phenomenal Airman.

Another great Airman. This is Jo. Jo we met out at March. She happens to be a Reserve Airman, med tech type superintendent out there. She is so committed to this Yellow Ribbon program. She talks about it, she's passionate about it, she gives all her time to it when she has a spare moment. She's just connected to it.

So when she was talking to Athena and I about it we asked her where does this come from? Where does that drive and passion really come from that has you so connected to this? And she brought us back to 1996 when she was in Saudi Arabia. She was at that point four years in our Air Force. Out jogging with a team mate around the base, going in front of the compound there. Her and her team mate noticed several response vehicles, emergency vehicles fly by. Moments later, a huge explosion. This is the Khobar Towers bombings. She's thrown, along with her team mate. Both receiving injuries. But Jo gets up immediately and instinctively like our Airmen always do. She doesn't run, she doesn't tend to herself, she runs to the blast.

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

She knows she has fellow Airmen that were there, that were in the middle of that.

So she goes and tends to them and does her best to assist everybody. Then what she recollects from that time, and it almost seems like a different time, a different place to her when she talks about it, she says, she recollects as the days pursued afterwards how there was just this thirst and need for connecting with the folks back home. Everybody had questions. Everybody wanted to know what was going on. How were they connected back to the base? How were they going to get information to know what took place to their loved one? And that's how Joe got so connected to this, by being able to connect with those families, she's able to kind of continue to create that bond so people aren't so nervous and concerned every time. They know there's a community out there, an Air Force family that's going to kind of take them through this idea of service and sacrifice. So what a great Airman.

Another great Airman. This is Tech Sergeant Jay Chea. He's got a great story. We met him out at Peterson. Jay is one of three maintainers in the space headquarters that does all the QA for the entire enterprise. Three maintainers that do this.

So as we always do when we go out, we want to hear their story. What made you decide to join our Air Force? What's your background? It gets that personal thing, get to know them a little bit. So you're not going to really believe Jay's story.

Back in 1975, people can remember Cambodia, the Pol Pot regime took over. Four years of just devastation, over two million people killed. Jay's parents were killed during that time. He and his younger brother worked their way through the jungle, avoiding the rebel camps that were clearly looking to kill them, made their way to Thailand. And because of the demographics of Jay and his brother they wouldn't accept them into the camp. They said no, you've got to go back to Cambodia. You can't be here. Because there were so many people and so much confusion they actually stayed in the camp and nobody really ever made them leave.

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

Over the next four years Jay learned English by peering through the huts where they were working with the folks that they had actually accepted into the camp to kind of get them to a place where they could then apply to come to America. So after four years of that Jay was granted entrance into the United States. Went to California. Lived in California and Washington over the next few years with relatives. Then he decided to come in and serve in our United States Air Force.

That's the kind of Airmen that serve in our Air Force. That's the kind of amazing stories. You think about our 12 Outstanding Airmen. Four of our 12 Outstanding Airmen, they're from Jamaica, Bangladesh, Canada, Australia. They come to our country. They come to America. They want to serve. They want to be part of the world's greatest Air Force. It's just amazing. If that doesn't get at your heart, if that doesn't say despite all the stuff that we laid out there and all the challenges that we've been facing, and again I think the Chief laid it out well, every generation has had their challenges. This is our time. But this challenge is full of opportunity to continue to move ourself forward. And to do that, we have to make sure we're taking care of our folks in the right way and that's got to be balance.

I put this up there a lot. The Chief and the Secretary talk about this work/life balance. Because we're getting a lot of feedback. I think you're hearing a lot of feedback. You're partaking in the discussion. Well, you know, we can't keep doing more on the backs of our Airmen. We can't keep putting more on the backs of our Airmen. So if you haven't heard it, take a note: Everything we do in our United States Air Force is going to be done on the backs of our Airmen. There's nobody else. This is what we do and who we are. The real discussion, is it reasonable and sustainable. Is it the right type of things. That's the discussion. Not the idea that we're not going to work hard. We're going to work hard. We always have. We live for that legacy every single day and we will into the future. It's what makes us who we are and how we're able to do what we do. But we've got to get this right.

I'll talk a little bit about some of the things later in the presentation that we are doing, but this falls under how we're

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

looking at comprehensive Airman fitness, how we're looking at the resiliency of our communities, our Airmen and their families, and how we get this right. And we're being very deliberate about it and meaningful about it.

You just don't always think it's going to mean okay, you ask me not to do this thing. It might be we just do something a little bit differently that puts us in balance and how we get this right.

Balance isn't this. Balance goes like this in our business. You just have to be prepared for that. As long as we're doing this and we're getting it right over time, that can be reasonable and sustainable. But that's the real discussion. Not are we going to work hard. We're going to work hard. If you're not in for the hard work you're not in for what we're getting ready to do and what we've been doing. You just aren't.

To do that too, we have to continue to invest and look at how we develop and educate the force, how we holistically look at enlisted development. And largely over time, most of you are familiar with the career field education and training plans that are in the front of all our training records for the enlisted force. They kind of have this triangle. WE call it a pyramid but it really is representation of a triangle. It kind of shows you how you go up this path in a functional way to kind of meet the most senior person in your career field. But as an Air Force, and when you think about how we develop you, it's much more than that. It truly is a pyramid and you have to go around that whole pyramid to look at what we need in the leadership of our enlisted force to be able to do the things that we're going to ask you to do in the future. To be agile. To be adaptive leaders. You're going to have to do this.

So you can certainly go up the triangle and get to the top in your career field, but the true sense of development and what we have to continue to evolve in, what we've been working on for so many years is how do you get up that pyramid moving around it and doing different things and getting the right breadth and depth.

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

This morning we were with some of our industry folks and it was a very similar discussion about how we develop officers, to make sure you have the breadth and depth in multiple disciplines to be an effective leader when you get to the very top where you're going to influence the next generation of Airmen serving.

So it's important we get that right. As we move forward we're going to do some pretty significant things, and these are all underway. I can imagine during our Q&A later today there will be lots more questions about this. But this is exciting. This is exciting because it's a turning point as we're moving forward, as we're going to be that smallest Air Force, as we think about deliberate development at the next level we have to evolve the systems that have been in place a long time, that worked for quite some time and did what we needed them to do, and really think about what they need to do in the future. Similar to what Mr. Yaley's quote was with the Chief, right? Not the Air Force that we were but the Air Force that we want to be. The Air Force that the American people expect us to be. This ability to adapt and overcome.

So we're going to get after this enlisted evaluation system, and here's your main take-away on this. Performance is going to count. It's going to count in the way that you visibly see it. It's going to be pretty abrupt when you think about all the data that we have looked over, that spans decades of how over time that performance and the value of that performance has been eroded at, just in the execution of what largely would be considered an outstanding system. There's just one flaw in the system we have today. It's us. We're the flaw in that we can't execute it in the way we need to execute it where that discernment takes place. This will get after that.

We're going to get after promotions too. Again, something that over time when you think about the force, what we expect of the force in the future, how we promote people has to evolve. Over time we value different things, we look at different things in people and we need to get after that.

One of the most significant parts that will take place here for us over the next year and a half is we're going to next year implement master sergeant promotion boards. That's not because

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

we think any Airman in the United States Air Force to master sergeant, senior master sergeant and chief master sergeant weren't the right people to get promoted. We absolutely know they were the right people to get promoted because we promoted them. If we didn't want to promote them we wouldn't have done it. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't have this discussion as we think about what the roles and responsibilities are of a master sergeant in the United States Air Force today comparatively to what they were let's just say 30 years ago. There really is no comparison.

So if you think about it in that context you think about them, what is it we're looking for in those tech sergeants into the future? And what we're looking for is superior sustained performance. Over time. That's what we're going to be able to see when we do these records. We've done the analysis, we've done the tests.

The Chief, General Welsh, gave us this direction. I think everybody's confident this is the way to go. But it's important your takeaway is not that we promoted the wrong people. It's that systems must evolve over time to meet the demands and the needs of the institution, and that's what we're doing here.

We're also advancing how we deliver professional military education. We have worked diligently over decades to build the brick and mortar system that we have today. It is a high quality level of education that we provide for our Airmen. IT really is. But it is now beginning to lag. It lags in the fact when you look across the enterprise of education and the varied methods of delivering education and the most effective ways of delivering education, the blended approach is the most effective approach to deliver and it is more adaptable for us. We can deliver it to more Airmen. We can make sure that every component of our Air Force has access to it an equal way where we don't have to prioritize one over the other because of the cost associated with it. And the outcomes are much higher.

So these are exciting things that we're doing. This is how we're answering the call. We are evolving and moving forward in how we think about these things, and putting ourselves into place so when we hand this Air Force off to these 12 Outstanding

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

Airmen and they're in these positions and leading, we've set them up on the platform by which they can see the future. Looking at the platforms that we stand on today from those that came before us.

So we're doing good here. Lots of work to be done and we're going to leverage all of that. That costs money. The chief talked about the fact that we're going to continue to invest in this because it's important, right? It's really important.

But every Airman has a role. Every single Airman has a role. And we're not going to just blindly invest in folks when you think about this human capital strategy. We're really not. We're going to expect a return on every dollar we put into an Airman. The country expects a return on every dollar we invest in our Airmen. And we should be prepared to do that.

Let me give you an example of one of these great Airmen that are answering the call. General Welsh and Mrs. Welsh and Athena and I actually met Bill when we were out at Oklahoma Air National Guard.

He is a fuels technician on F-16s. We have a problem with F-16s that over time about 20-25 of them a year start to leak fuel out of one of the vents. And the process in the past was we sent those actually back to Lockheed. It cost us about half a million dollars per unit to have them take off the wing, do all the stuff they had to do and get them back.

So Bill, being the expert that he truly is, working on that airplane every day, he figured out that really it's a \$300 part and he can do it. So we're saving \$10 to \$12 million a year on this because that innovative Airman knew he was empowered to tell us there was a better way to do it and we're doing it. That's why we're going to be in really good shape into the future. No question about it.

So our Airmen are answering the call to the future. I talked a little bit about what we're doing with things when you talk about work/life balance, and I do think that goes into exactly what has taken place over the last year and a half. It started I think as a call when the Vice Chief put out Every Dollar

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

Counts. We had over 11,000 Airmen come up with ideas about things that we could do differently or better, save time, save money. That does help with the work/life balance. Now that has transitioned to Airmen Powered by Innovation. We have over 4,000 ideas. Many of those ideas are being and can be implemented right at the wing level. They're empowered to do so. The Chief of Staff has said to his wing commanders and over and over again that they are empowered to do that if it makes sense. If it doesn't make sense to keep doing it, stop doing it. And we're going to see great results in this.

And this is necessary. This is absolutely necessary for our Air Force. If we're going to get this work/life balance right, if we're going to be able to live within the resource constrained environment that is our reality, not necessarily our desired state but our reality, we're going to have to continue to do this. And this really isn't new business for Airmen. If you go back to the Secretary's presentation just two days ago, that was all innovation. That was all forward thinking Airmen. That was Airmen literally, more than 67 years ago as of tomorrow that were thinking about the future and what was necessary. They really are. So we're just doing our part as we continue to carry that legacy forward.

So there are lots of examples of this. We will be successful into the future because of Airmen. It's just that simple. They'll be creative, they'll be innovative. Next slide.

[Video shown.]

Just a great example of Airmen shaping the future. Partnering with industry, building that aircraft the way that our nation needs it to be able to perform as we do it.

This kind of summarizes that it's our Air Force. We own it. It was handed off to us. I think we got it handed off in pretty good shape. We're going to do our very best to bring it forward.

As you look at all the uncertainty that's out there, and there has been. It's been a challenging year. This is probably the most difficult part I know for both Athena and I, and I share

Professional Word Processing & Transcribing
(801) 556-7255

these discussions with the Secretary and Chief, the hardest thing we've had to do this year and there have been hard things, but the hardest thing to do is to ask great Airmen to leave. Great Airmen that have done everything that their nation and country has asked them to do. Sacrificed and served. There's been nothing harder. There really hasn't. They've given everything. And unfortunately, reality is such that we have to let some really good Airmen go. We'll do our best to help them transition and there will always be a place for them in our thoughts. But nonetheless, this enterprise is bigger than any one person. It truly is and it has to go forward. WE have to do the tough things.

But we're going to be okay because we just laid it out for you over the last two days about why we're going to be okay. We're going to be better than okay. We'll remain this world's greatest Air Force because we have the men and women just like you and the thousands from around the world doing exactly what their country needs them to do. Every single day, every moment of the day.

Again, I think the most powerful thing that happens is when they tell you their story. When we take ownership of our Air Force and we realize that anything that's good about it is within us and anything that needs to be fixed we have the ability to shape and influence that. We really do. Even if it's tough, we have the ability to influence that change and we will.

So let's kind of close it out with just one more video that kind of has a few more Airmen talking about our Air Force.

[Video shown.]

So no question, our Airmen, the source of air power. And What I want the take-away to be today is, be extremely proud of what you do every day. Your leadership, your country. We have the distinct honor and privilege of representing you around the world in many different forums and many different groups of people. No less our civilian leadership. And to a person, every time we spend time with them they thank each and every one of you for your service and sacrifice. It may not seem that sometimes in the big picture when tough calls are being made,

The Enlisted Perspective - 9/17/14

but nonetheless, to a person that's how they feel. This is your Air Force and our Airmen are the source of air power. God bless. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you Chief Master Sergeant Cody. Thank you for what you've shared with us.

#